

News Flash: Jeff Lacy got mugged

Written by Rick Folstad

Sunday, 18 September 2005 19:00

No one pulled a gun on him or stuck a knife in his ribs or threatened his life. He didn't get jumped in a dark alley or have his house broken into while he was gone. No one grabbed his wallet and ran.

But he was robbed just the same.

Joe Calzaghe – or more likely his promoter, Frank Warren – did the dirty work, though you can't charge Calzaghe with a crime other than having brittle hands, poor judgment and a guardian angel who keeps him out of tough spots.

Instead, all you can do is shake your head and remember that Calzaghe, the WBO super-middleweight champ, has a long and storied history of ducking big fights.

He sure found a way to duck this one.

Calzaghe was supposed to fight Lacy, the IBF super-middleweight champ, on Nov. 5 in London. But apparently, he broke his left hand fighting tiny Evans Ashira of Kenya last weekend in a tune-up fight. And since plaster casts don't fit well inside tight-fitting 8-ounce gloves, Calzaghe won't be fighting Lacy, at least not this year.

Maybe not the next.

Who would have guessed?

Of course, that means they won't be cutting Lacy a seven-figure paycheck, though he'll probably survive the long, harsh St. Petersburg winter despite the lost revenue.

Lacy's promoter, Gary Shaw, isn't surprised Calzaghe, who lives in Wales, is out. He went into this thing with his eyes wide open. He knew the reputation. Boy, did he know. He's been in the fight business long enough to understand how things work. And sometimes they don't work at all. Besides, he's not the only guy to be left standing alone on the corner by Warren and company.

"I think Frank Warren has a money cow in Calzaghe and he's going to milk it for all it's worth," said Steve Canton, trainer of super-middleweight contender Freeman Barr, who spent 25 months as the WBO's No. 1 contender without getting a fight with Calzaghe. "They keep screaming about getting the big fight, fighting Bernard Hopkins, Roy Jones, Antonio Tarver, Sven Ottke and Glen Johnson. But none of those fights took place. Instead, he fights guys like Will McIntyre, Miguel Jimenez and Tocker Pudwill. I think Warren is just playing it safe with his fighter."

When Shaw first announced the fight between Lacy and Calzaghe this summer after Lacy beat

News Flash: Jeff Lacy got mugged

Written by Rick Folstad

Sunday, 18 September 2005 19:00

Robin Reid, he sounded like a guy trying to convince himself that miracles can actually happen.

“We’ve got an agreement to fight Calzaghe, but, ah...”

Yeah, we know Gary. Cross your fingers.

You could almost see him roll his eyes every time he mentioned Calzaghe’s name.

Turns out, Shaw was right when he questioned whether or not Calzaghe would be ready to finally fight a legitimate threat to the title he’s defended 17 times.

“When Freeman was the No. 1 contender, the WBO told him he needed to fight a top-15 fighter to qualify for a fight with Calzaghe,” Canton said. “They then told us Tocker Pudwill wasn’t good enough to fight Freeman as a qualifier. But then Pudwill is good enough to fight Calzaghe for the title?”

It’s a funny thing about Calzaghe. Undefeated in 40 fights with 31 knockouts, he’s never fought on this side of the Atlantic. He could walk into the Garden on fight night and no one would ask him for an autograph.

And it’s too bad, because Calzaghe is a gifted fighter and a warrior who deserves a chance to show how great he can be. But he isn’t going to prove anything fighting the Tocker Pudwills of the fight game.

In his tune-up fight with Ashira, Calzaghe was going up against a light-hitter who spent most of his career fighting as a junior- middleweight and middleweight. But there’s still that chance that something could go wrong. Someone could – gasp – break a hand.

“When Shaw announced Lacy would be fighting Calzaghe, I said I didn’t think that fight would ever happen,” said Canton, who attended the Lacy-Reid fight in August. “Think about it. Why would you have Calzaghe fight an optional fight just seven weeks before he’s supposed to fight Lacy? Doesn’t make sense. And on top of that, this is a guy who is injury-prone, who has a problem with his hands. Why gamble and fight a nobody? Wouldn’t you rather have him stay in the gym and get ready for Lacy and a big money fight?”

Robbed in broad daylight.